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DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Human resource development through technical co-operation

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Human resource development through technical co-operation" (A/45/113).

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Comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Human resource development through technical co-operation" (JIU/REP/89/10)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Human resource development through technical co-operation" (A/45/113) is a timely contribution in view of the increasing attention and importance given to human resource development by the United Nations system in recent years. The conclusions and recommendations in the report highlight some important aspects of the programmes and activities of the system aimed at human resource development through technical co-operation.

2. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) notes that the report covers the human resource development-related activities of various organizations in the system and draws attention to the problems that they are facing in the implementation of their programmes. Some organizations, however, did not feel that their programmes were adequately reflected in the report.

3. The Inspector is of the view that the system's contribution to human resource development is considerable and that Member States are the principal beneficiaries of this effort. At the same time, however, it was observed that the integration of that effort into the development process of developing countries was not always successful. As an example, the Inspector pointed out the high wastage rate of trained manpower after completion of training or non-use of trained personnel in an appropriate job category in the countries for which the training was given. In the conclusion, the emphasis is placed on the need for a more co-ordinated approach to the question of human resource development through technical co-operation in the United Nations system. The Inspector has made three recommendations for this purpose based on his observations: (a) establishment of an inter-agency "focal point" in the field of human resource development; (b) promotion of human fulfilment at the grass-roots level; and (c) keeping human resource development and its integration in the development process as a permanent agenda item of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee for the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade.

II. COMMENTS

General comments

4. As the Inspector stated, human resource development has always been a major consideration in all development programmes of the organizations within the United Nations system. ACC shares the view of the Inspector that the knowledge and understanding of the fundamental underlying relationships between human resource development and social and economic development, and of the very strong interactions among the several components of human resource development, is still inadequate. Accordingly, the need for further policy-oriented research in this

area is increasingly recognized. ACC also agrees with the Inspector on the importance of co-ordination among agencies in programme implementation in human resource development through technical co-operation.

5. While the report was found useful as a compendium of organizations' activities on human resource development comprising quantitative data on various fellowship and training programmes of the United Nations system, it would have benefited from more analysis of such activities, including clearer definition of key concepts such as human resource development and training. ACC, therefore, feels that a more solid analytical framework based on clearly established methodology and terms of reference would have made the report more persuasive.

6. With regard to the question of the high wastage rate and non-use of trained personnel which the Inspector pointed out in his report, some organizations share the concern and they attribute this problem to the following two reasons: (a) the ever changing government priorities in developing countries, which result in the transfer of trained personnel to new responsibilities that do not require the use of the skills in which they were trained and (b) the not always correct selection of the trainees. Other organizations, however, were of the view that the absorption of trained personnel has not necessarily proved difficult. It was further pointed out that many people (usually government personnel), after having been trained, tend to leave the government for the private sector. While this is frustrating at the working level, it can be assumed that the result will be a contribution to human resource development for that country in the long term as long as the trained personnel do not leave the country.

7. Another aspect upon which some organizations disagreed with the Inspector is the way to identify the human resource development element in their programmes. The Inspector himself referred to this difficulty in paragraph 9 of his report and considered that, in the case of UNESCO, virtually all its activities were aimed towards human resource development because of their cross-sectoral nature. In this context, FAO pointed out that the programmes of other organizations, including FAO, were also of a cross-sectoral nature and that the human resource development activities of FAO went much beyond those cited in the document.

Comments on specific recommendations

8. Recommendation 1, namely, to establish an inter-agency "focal point" to monitor and assess co-ordination of programme preparation and implementation by Member States and the United Nations agencies in the field of human resource development. ACC supports, in principle, the need for appropriate co-ordination and avoidance of duplication in the programme activities in the field of human resource development in the United Nations system.

9. However, ACC is of the view that co-ordination arrangement for this purpose must be flexible and must take into account the broad scope and diversified nature of activities for human resource development that organizations undertake.

10. On the Inspector's suggestion for a focal point, many members of ACC expressed their concern over the difficulties that such a focal point might encounter in

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attempting to give appropriate attention to all programmes in all sectors. In their view, it could simply lead to the creation of another bureaucratic layer. They were of the view that appropriate co-ordination is being carried out through the existing inter-agency mechanisms, particularly those under ACC framework. It was also pointed out that there existed several modalities of co-ordination mechanisms among agencies, including bilateral consultation, to achieve better co-ordination.

11. With regard to the possibility of entrusting the focal point function with UNDP, as suggested in the same recommendation, while some members of ACC consider it a reasonable option, others do not agree to it. They were of the view that human resource development activities of the United Nations system go beyond UNDP-funded projects, and such a "focal point" may not be suitable to deal with training projects or activities financed directly by individual donor Governments.

12. Recommendation 2 suggests the promotion of human fulfilment at the grass-roots level, thereby ensuring that people whose labour is needed become willing and active participants in the development process. ACC fully agrees to the importance of grass-roots level mobilization. At the same time, however, it should also be borne in mind that in some of the technical agencies it is inevitable that certain training programmes are directed not to the grass-roots level but rather at higher professional levels because of the highly technical and professional nature of the training programmes.

13. Recommendation 3, ACC agrees that human resource development should be a key component of the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade and had conveyed its view to the Ad Hoc Committee. ACC also welcomes the suggestion of the Inspector that the criteria, the methodological approach, and all other aspects of the problem should be more thoroughly discussed at the intergovernmental level. Since this matter is on the agenda of the Economic and Social Council, ACC believes that such discussion could be pursued there.